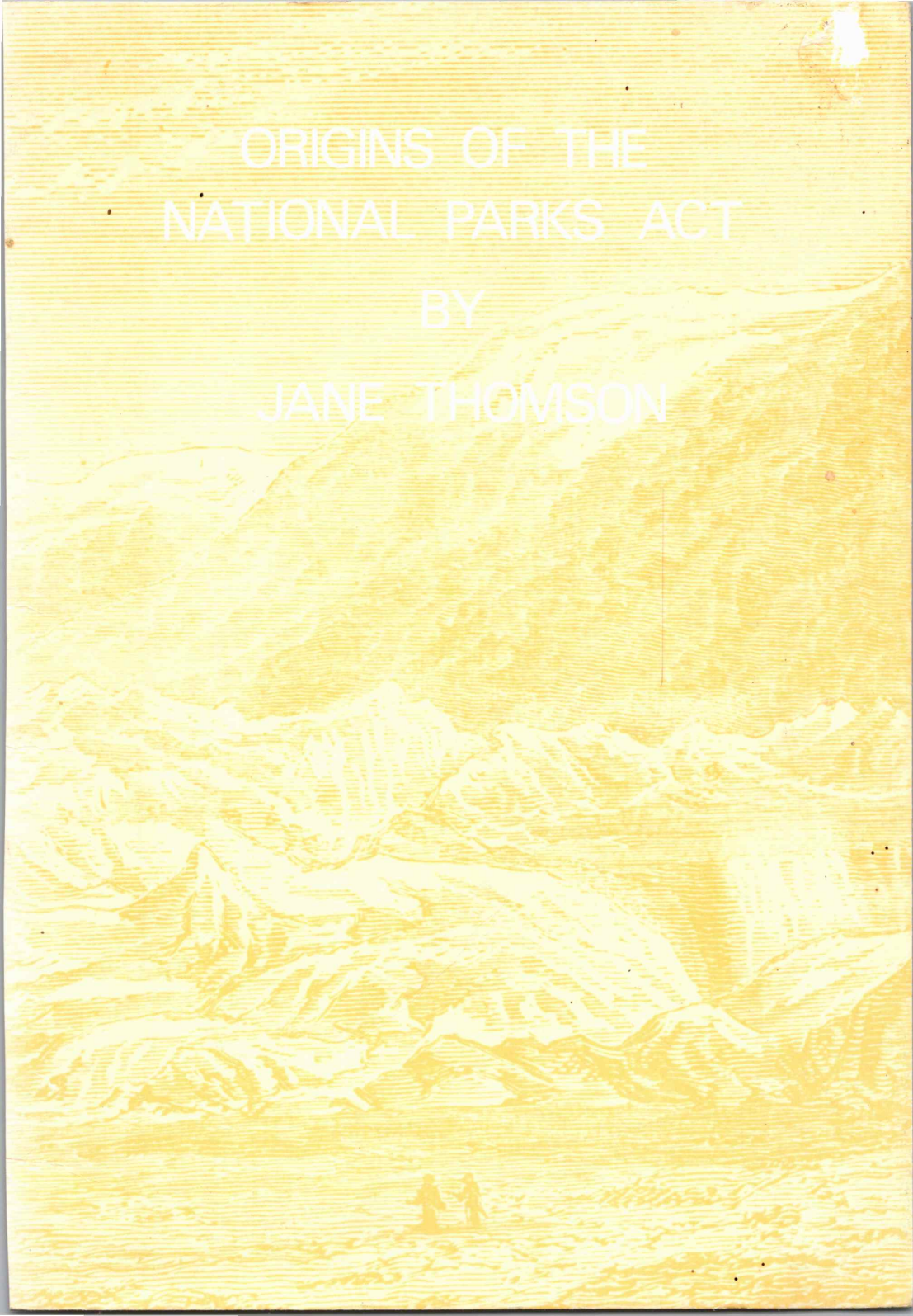
ORIGINS OF THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT

BY

JANE THOMSON



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THE ORIGINS OF THE 1952 NATIONAL PARKS ACT

In August 1952 the New Zealand House of Representatives debated a Bill designed 'to present in a more clear-cut and concise manner a policy for the control and administration of these vast areas of open spaces which we call our national parks.' The debate was notable principally for its peace and harmony. Poetry was quoted and members reminisced - the old about the virgin forests of their youth, the young about their tramping exploits. The advantages of the Bill in providing for recreation and for the preservation of scenery, wild life and economic assets were pointed out. Tributes were paid to Mr Ron Cooper of the Department of Lands and Survey and to Mr A.P. Harper of the Federated Mountain Clubs and the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society. Members fell over each other to praise the Bill and one exclaimed, 'There are, thank goodness, no politics in this Bill.' It would seem that the Bill, which was seen by some as bringing us into line with other advanced countries, was overdue.[1]

Before 1952 legislation governing the administration of national parks was, to say the least, untidy: it was a matter for conjecture whether some reserves really were, and whether others ought to be national parks; and although certain clear principles for the administration of the parks had evolved, they were nowhere plainly stated in legislation. Three parks, Tongariro, Egmont and Peel Forest (a small park which the Department of Lands and Survey felt should really be classified as a reserve) were administered by park boards set up by special Acts during the 1920's. Abel Tasman and Arthur Pass National Parks were administered by boards set up under Part Three of the Public Reserves, Domains and National Parks Act, 1928. The membership of these five boards varied considerably and some were very large: the Tongariro Board, with a possible membership of eighteen, included the Minister and the Under-Secretary of Lands; the Egmont Board included members of local bodies. In most cases the Secretary of the board was a member of the Department of Lands and Survey or the local Commissioner of Crown Lands, but at Egmont he was an accountant. Besides these five parks, the Department in 1948 listed another four which had no board and were administered by the Commissioner of Crown Lands. These were an unnamed park of 94,060 acres on the main ridge of the Southern Alps, Tasman Park, Hooker Glacier, and Fiordland. The last named park consisted of 2,407,000 acres.[2]

Clearly some simplification of the administrative structure was needed. To some extent the 1952 Act can be seen as a consolidating and simplifying measure, but it would be more accurate to say that some features of the old system of administration were incorporated in an entirely new two tier administrative structure, which provided for the inclusion of both government officials and representatives of sporting and conservationist bodies and local interests.

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1. NZPD, 1952, Vol. 297, pp. 712-25, 763-71.
2. Lands and Survey, file 4/426/2, Paper presented by D.M. Greig to N.Z. National Tourist Conference, 5 March 1950; ibid., Under-Secretary to Lush, 2 December 1948. See also other documents on this file.

The Act began with a brief definition of national parks as those 'areas of New Zealand that contain scenery of such distinctive quality or natural features so beautiful or unique that their preservation is in the national interest.' The main principles for the administration of the parks were then clearly stated. Parks were to be preserved as far as possible in their natural state - native flora and fauna were as far as possible to be preserved and introduced flora and fauna as far as possible exterminated - and the public were to have freedom of entry. Thus a dual purpose of nature conservation and recreation was for the first time made explicit.

Part I of the Act authorised the establishment of a new body - a National Parks Authority of nine members - which was to form the top tier of national parks administration. Five officials represented the four Government Departments interested in the parks: Lands and Survey, Internal Affairs, New Zealand Forest Service and Tourist and Publicity. One person was appointed on the recommendation of each of the Royal Society of New Zealand, the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, and the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand. One person represented the National Park Boards. The duties of the Authority were set out in the following terms:

(a) To advocate and adopt schemes for the protection of National Parks and for their development on a national basis:

(b) To recommend the enlargement of existing Parks and the setting apart of new ones:

(c) To recommend to the Minister the manner in which moneys appropriated by Parliament for the administration, maintenance, and improvement of National Parks should be allocated:

(d) To exercise in relation to National Parks and National Park Boards such powers and functions as are conferred on the Authority by this Act:

(e) Generally to control in the national interest the administration of all National Parks in New Zealand.

Specific provision was made for Government policy in relation to national parks to be carried out. The Authority was required to 'have regard to any representations that may be made' by the Minister of Lands for this purpose.

Part II dealt with the lower tier of national parks administration, which was to consist of a National Park Board of eight or nine members in each of the five parks: Tongariro, Egmont, Abel Tasman, Arthur Pass and Fiordland. The membership varied slightly in accordance with local needs and usage: for example the Tongariro Board included a descendant of the Maori chief Te Heuheu Tukino who gave land to the park, and at Egmont where farmers were vitally interested in the maintenance of the park, provision was made for local bodies to be presented on the board. Other members included the local Commissioner of Crown Lands and appointees of the Minister, to include, where appropriate, representatives of the Federated Mountain Clubs and the Ski Council. The functions of the board were 'to administer, manage, and control the Park in accordance

with the Act and subject to the general policy and direction of the Authority in such a manner as to secure to the public the fullest proper use and enjoyment of the park consistent with the preservation of its natural features and the protection and well-being of its native flora and fauna.' Specific powers were vested in the board to provide facilities for park officers and park users, subject in some cases to the consent of the Authority, and in all cases to an overriding concern for the natural features and flora and fauna of the park.

The Act also made detailed provision for the conduct of meetings, terms of office of members, delegation of powers, for the creation of new parks, for the setting apart of special areas and wilderness areas within the parks, and for the making of by-laws by the boards. Financial provisions specified the funds of boards in general terms and how they should be spent. A lengthy section of the Act detailed offences within the parks and specified how proceedings were to be taken against offenders. In all it was a thorough and comprehensive piece of legislation setting up a broadly based administrative structure which not only suited the five named parks, but could easily incorporate any new parks that might be created.

The idea of a national park originated in the United States, with the creation of the Yellowstone Park in 1872. The first Canadian parks were established in the 1880's and New Zealand's Tongariro National Park was set aside in 1894. John Ise, the historian of United States national parks policy, has pointed out that only Canada and New Zealand have developed the national park idea on anything like the United States scale. Both, like the States, were sparsely populated, contained large areas suitable for reservation, and were wealthy enough to administer these areas reasonably well.[3] In Canada the establishment of a Parks Service was authorised by an Act of 1911; in the U.S.A. an Act defining the purpose of the parks and setting up a well funded Parks Service was passed in 1916. New Zealand clearly lagged behind, although perhaps not so far as one might suppose, since neither the United States nor Canada achieved protection of scenery or wild life overnight.

There was, too, a certain logic in the timing of New Zealand's National Parks Act. The twenties and thirties were lean years, and in the forties war and post war problems occupied us. Public opinion was slow to educate and for many years money hard to come by, and these two factors were mirrored in the attitude of politicians to reform. While funds were low and public opinion as a whole apathetic, no politician would support an expensive luxury like national parks. By 1952 prosperity and public opinion rendered reform not merely possible but politically advantageous.

Financial considerations apart, a major problem in reforming national parks administration was the question of whom the administering should be done by. Would government officials look after the parks in the manner that the enthusiasts and scientists thought fit? Were park boards representing local enthusiasm and local knowledge an adequate alternative? National parks were generally agreed to be 'the people's heritage' but it took some time to work out how best to preserve and make available the

3. John Ise, Our National Park Policy, Baltimore, 1961, p. 658.

heritage of the people.

This essay sets out to tell how a system of administration in keeping with the ideal of what a national park should be was evolved. The story shows how a piece of uncontroversial, non-party legislation took shape, as a result of pressure from interested and informed individuals and groups in interaction with a government department which progressed from indifference, even hostility to reform, to sympathy and finally enthusiasm. This slow evolution of a policy provides an interesting and revealing example of the democratic process of consultation, discussion and compromise among conflicting interests. The Act which resulted from it pleased all groups and with minor modifications the administration it set up has worked well since.

The first recorded proposal for unity in control of New Zealand's national parks was put forward on conservationist grounds. The parks contained examples of New Zealand's unique flora, but introduced plants and animals were altering their original character. Without some form of control by botanical specialists the unique vegetation of the parks could not be preserved. In 1927 Dr. Arthur Hill, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew was invited to New Zealand to report on the possibility of setting up National Botanic Gardens here. As a botanist primarily concerned with the preservation of plant species, Dr. Hill was horrified at the ravages of goats on Mt. Egmont and at the spread of introduced heather at Tongariro. If urgent measures were not taken Dr. Hill believed that the character of these parks as reserves of natural vegetation would be destroyed beyond repair. He therefore suggested that the Director of the proposed Botanic Gardens should be chairman of the board or have some direct control over the management of these reserves.[4]

This idea, which would have involved rethinking the whole system of national parks administration was treated with the traditional New Zealand disrespect for expert or academic opinion. Besides pointing out that money, not experts was the real problem, the Editor of the *Taranaki Daily News* wrote, 'It would be quite impossible for any one man to gain the local knowledge necessary to do justice to the work.'[5] The permanent head of the Department of Lands and Survey took strong exception to some of Dr. Hill's remarks which seemed to imply that his department was falling short of its duty to preserve the flora; he too defended the good work of public spirited amateurs in running the parks. No action was recommended.[6]

During the 1930's, in spite of unprecedented economic and social problems in New Zealand, there was mounting pressure for reform of the national parks, and for measures to check the destruction of native forests, from people who feared that if conservation were left over till prosperity returned little would be left to conserve.[7] One such reformer

4. Lands and Survey, file 4/426/2, Report of Dr Arthur Hill, 14 February 1928, pp. 9-10.
5. 9 April 1928, in Lands and Survey, 4/426/2.
6. Lands and Survey, file 4/426/2, Thompson to Secretary, D.S.I.R., 25 May 1928.
7. See correspondence in Lands and Survey, file 4/426. In 1937 a conference was held on the theme of bush preservation.

was E. Phillips Turner, a former Director of Forestry and a self-styled 'conservationist'. In 1932 Phillips Turner wrote to the Under-Secretary of Lands deploring the number of deer and game in the national parks and commenting that the latest *Annual Report, Public Domains and National Parks of New Zealand* placed too much emphasis on sport and too little on animal, plant and bird life.[8] In 1936, in a paper to the Auckland Institute of Horticulture (a copy of which he took care to forward to the Department of Lands and Survey) Phillips Turner attempted to define the objects of a national parks policy in terms of a balance between conservation and recreation, and advocated the setting up of a bureau for the administration of national parks. He pointed out that in Europe and Japan a national park was defined as an area reserved for for scientific purposes; in North America recreation was a main purpose though flora and fauna were to be interfered with as little as possible.

> In New Zealand the Acts under which the national parks are constituted do not define the *purpose* of reservation, though sections of the Acts prohibit such actions as the cutting down of trees, the removal of plants, the killing of birds, the lighting of fires etc..... They do not prohibit the introduction of exotic plants and animals into the parks .....In my opinion there should be a new Act passed defining the purpose of each class of reserve, so that no departure from that purpose can be affected..... The Act should provide for the establishment of a distinct branch - the Bureau of National Parks and Scenic Reserves - of the Lands Department, under the control of an officer who has the special qualifications for the efficient administration and management of the reserves.....[9]

Clearly Phillips Turner had an important contribution to make, but he was already an old man and died in 1937.

Similar proposals were put forward in a memorandum by the New Zealand Tourist League in 1937, recommending, among other things, the formulation of a national parks policy for the more effective preservation of forests and reserves and to enably greater use of them by the public; the constitution of a national reserves division with a Director under the Department of Lands and Survey or New Zealand Forest Service; and that national parks and other reserves should be classified and their purpose defined. [10] .There is no indication that these early proposals were seriously considered by the Lands Department - perhaps because they were not followed up by persistent pressure from their authors - although Phillips Turner's discussion of the objects of a national parks policy for New Zealand may have had some influence on departmental policy.

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8. Lands and Survey, file 4/426, Phillips Turner to Under-Secretary, Lands and Survey, 20 December 1932.
9. ibid., E. Phillips Turner, 'Scenic Reserves and National Parks.'
10. ibid., 'Forest Preservation and National Park Policy', Memorandum by N.Z. Tourist League, Inc., Auckland, February 1937.
11. Dr Hill's report and the more important of the early Federated Mountain Clubs proposals were placed on a different file, dealing with control of national parks, from these other early proposals, which were placed on a general file.

Meanwhile a more persevering body had moved into the field of national parks reform, a body representing the largest number of park users and knowledgeable enthusiasts - the trampers and climbers. In 1931 a Federation of Mountain Clubs in New Zealand was formed, and at its first Annual General Meeting in May 1932 the President, F.W. Vosseler, expressed his concern for the welfare of national parks and reserves which, he said, were not the property of the Government but belonged to the people of today and tomorrow. Steps should be taken to see that the Federated Mountain Clubs were represented on the Park Boards.[12] This was the beginning of nearly twenty years of persistent but unhurried pressure on the Government, and it seems that the main ideas embodied in the 1952 Act were an expansion of the policy put forward by the Federated Mountain Clubs in the 1930's. It is worth noting that the Federated Mountain Clubs as a matter of policy used all available means of publicity and political pressure: an attempt was usually made to follow up a letter with a personal interview, and Government officials were sometimes invited to Federated Mountain Clubs meetings.[13]

In May 1934 L.O. Hooker of Hawera reported to the Annual General Meeting of the Federation on investigations he had made into New Zealand's national parks and reserves. 'I have now realised,' he said, 'that the work we are doing in connection with the reserves is one of Dominion wide importance, not only for the present generation but for posterity.' Owing to the variety of reserves and of control he felt the question to be so complex that it would be unwise to proceed further without the co-operation of the government departments concerned: Tourist and Publicity, Lands and Survey, Forest Service and Internal Affairs. He felt that a committee should be set up consisting of representatives of the Federation and of these departments, to collect data and information. Representatives of the Lands and Survey and Tourist and Publicity Departments were present at the meeting but all that came of it was a Federated Mountain Clubs subcommittee on national parks, consisting of Hooker, Vosseler and A.P. Harper, to confer with the Government on the question.[14] This subcommittee went ahead with its own investigations and between 1934 and 1937 worked out the main features of Federated Mountain Clubs policy on national parks.

All three members of the subcommittee were lifelong enthusiasts for the mountains, though Harper, already seventy in 1935, author of *Pioneer Work in the Alps of New Zealand* (1896) and a prominent member of the New Zealand Alpine Club, was the best known. "A.P."'s longevity, relative eminence, and persistent interest lent weight to Federated Mountain Clubs representation to the Government and the Department of Lands and Survey between 1936 and 1950 by which time, at eighty-five he was also President of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society.

12. Federated Mountain Clubs Bulletin, No.27, April 1967.

13. ibid., quotes motion passed at 1935 Annual General Meeting; see also evidence of Federated Mountain Clubs file on Control of National Parks in possession of Mr R. Syme, and Lands and Survey files.

14. Lands and Survey, file 4/426, L.O. Hooker, Federated Mountain Clubs Report re Reserves Work, 17 May 1934; Dominion, 21 May 1934, p. 7.

On studying national parks administration in New Zealand and overseas, the subcommittee found that New Zealand had no uniformity of control and no general policy on national parks, and they decided 'to put forward suggestions for more systematic general control, based upon the successful and businesslike examples of the United States and Canada.' A central controlling authority should be set up to formulate general policy for national parks and to delegate administrative power to local committees. The central authority should consist of at least ten members selected for their practical qualifications - five appointed by the Government and five by the park users. The Minister should be chairman. General policy should include free right of entry and access by the public subject to reasonable safeguards; right of established clubs to erect huts; abandonment of the policy of leasing huge areas to commercial interests; and facilities for camping.[15] This policy as yet represented the interests of recreation rather than conservation, but it was not long before conservation too was included in the Federated Mountain Clubs' objectives.

In February 1936 Harper, Vosseler, Hooker and S.A. Wiren met with members of the newly elected Labour Government. Besides outlining the above proposals they pointed out the effects on the natural vegetation of the 'haphazard' system of administering national parks: at Mt Egmont and at Tongariro timber was being felled, and at Mt Cook the chamois appeared virtually to have eaten out the Mt Cook lily. The ministers were sympathetic, but held out little hope of reforms involving hard cash 'We agree with your objectives - the National Parks for the people.....' said the Prime Minister, Mr Savage. 'You say the National Parks have been starved through lack of money - well everything else has been starved for the same reason. That is the problem we have to handle.....'[16] Rightly leaving the question of how best to divide the diminished national cake to the politicians, the park enthusiasts, fearing a diminished national heritage, got on with the job of clarifying the case for reform. In 1938 a revised statement of Federated Mountain Clubs policy in relation to national parks was adopted and incorporated in a letter to the Minister of Lands. This short letter became an important document: as the first clearly presented statement of a possible policy for the administration of national parks it lay on the files of the Department of Lands and Survey for many years and with the help of some gentle prompting by its author, A.E. Galletly, Federated Mountain Clubs secretary from 1938 to 1945, was studied by departmental officers when reform was mooted. Though the suggested administrative structure was at first regarded as quite superfluous,[17] the proposed reforms eventually came to seem desirable, even inevitable, and it would seem that the Federated Mountain Clubs proposals became the germ of departmental policy. Such is the influence that a well informed and well organised pressure group can bring to bear on official policy.

15. Federated Mountain Clubs file, Report on National Parks, etc., with 5th Annual Report.

16. Lands and Survey, file 4/426/a, Deputation from Federated Mountain Clubs to Prime Minister, 24 February 1936.

17. Lands and Survey, file 4/426/2, Robertson to Minister of Lands, 5 July 1938; ibid., Schmitt to Minister in charge of Tourist and Health Resorts and Publicity, 7 July 1938.

The Federated Mountain Clubs' main proposals in 1938 were as follows. A national authority should be set up, and a board in each park. The national authority should have control of general policy and the distribution of finance, and should include representatives of Government Departments, the park boards and the Federated Mountain Clubs Park Boards should include a limited number of persons able and willing to visit the park frequently. General principles for the control of national parks should include, besides free access and rights of camping and hut building, that 'Native plant and animal life should as far as possible be preserved, and introduced plant and animal life should as far as possible be exterminated. Development of parks for recreation should be undertaken only in conformity with this principle.' No rights or privileges should be granted for commercial purposes if they might prove detrimental to the natural features of a park or restrict use for recreation.[18]

The war effectively put a stop to further agitation by the Federated Mountain Clubs, though in 1940 overtures for support were made to Dr Oliver of the Dominion Museum, Dr Allan of the Plant Research Station, and to the Royal Society. In the same year the Minister of Lands told the Federation that there was no chance during the war of major changes in the policy for control and administration of national parks.[19] In 1941 and 1942, with the Japanese in the South Pacific, even the Federated Mountain Clubs was silent. By the time pressure was resumed in 1944 changes in the Department of Lands and Survey had created a climate much more favourable to reform.

In particular, the growing influence of Ron Cooper altered the relationships between the department and the reformers, for Cooper, who had been responsible for national parks and scenic reserves since the late thirties, was himself a parks enthusiast. As Chief Clerk (1941), and Chief Land Administration Officer (1946), he was not one of the top people in the department which was fortunate because at this critical period - the end of the war and the immediate post war years - the senior departmental officers and the Minister, Mr Skinner, were all much preoccupied with the rehabilitation of returned servicemen. Cooper, a personal friend of R.G. Macmorran (departmental head 1939-46), was a relatively minor official and, it would seem, a humble person. He devoted much of his time to national parks and reserves and gradually became recognised not only as the departmental authority on the subject, but also as an advocate of reform. When ardent reformers like A.P. Harper, or L.W. McCaskill of Lincoln College, visited the department, it was Cooper they would meet. Likewise, it was Cooper who dealt with letters from the Federated Mountain Clubs and Cooper who attended Federated Mountain Clubs meetings to discuss reform.[20] Cooper created the relaxed and friendly atmosphere in which officials, scientists, mountaineers and politicians could discuss the problems involved in the reform of national parks administration.

18. ibid., Galletly to Minister of Lands, 15 June 1938; see also Federated Mountain Clubs file.

19. Federated Mountain Clubs file, minutes of executive meeting, 30 November 1940.

20. Information from Messrs. D.M. Greig, F.T. Barber, L. Avann, all former senior officers, Lands and Survey Department; Federated Mountain Clubs file, minutes of meeting, 2 December 1944.

In January 1944 Cooper was asked to speak to members of Wellington's Tararua Tramping Club on the subject of national parks.[21] His address revealed not only the development of a more clearly defined policy, but also a cautious recognition that the system of national parks administration did not necessarily represent the acme of perfection. He began by outlining the two possible conceptions of a national park, as a purely scientific reserve, and as a wilderness area to which the general public should have access. New Zealand's national parks, he said, came into the second category, and his definition is interesting because he used it on later occasions, and phrases of it were to be echoed in the 1952 Act.

> The other conception of a national park is that of a wilderness area set apart for preservation in as near as possible its natural state, but made available for and accessible to the general public, who are allowed and encouraged to visit the reserve. In such an area the recreation and enjoyment of the public is a main purpose, but at the same time the natural scenery, flora and fauna are interfered with as little as possible. Such a reserve should contain scenery of distinctive quality, or some natural features so extraordinary or unique as to be of national interest and importance, and as a rule it should be extensive in area.

After describing the rather complex system of administration, Cooper commented:

> I think it can be said that the system in force in New Zealand is working fairly well..... There might perhaps be room for some argument over the relative merits of direct Government control and control by special boards. Without being too definite on this point I think that at the present stage of the Dominion's development each form of control has certain advantages, and that there is a place for each. Certainly the linking up of the boards with the Government through the appointment of departmental officers as members and chairmen is of assistance in many ways.[22]

Till this time, the department had not recognised that there was 'room for argument' about national parks administration. Here was an opportunity for people with arguments to put them forward, and a few months later Galletly, on behalf of the Federated Mountain Clubs wrote again to the Department of Lands and Survey, reiterating the need for reform. The department's reply in November repeated some of Cooper's remarks to the Tararua Tramping Club, about national parks control, and asked for an 'up-to-the-minute statement' of the Federation's views. Galletly sent back the Federated Mountain Club's 1938 proposals, with some covering

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21. The Tararua Tramper, Vol. 16, No. 2, December 1943, p. 7.
22. Lands and Survey, file 4/426/2, Address delivered to members of the Tararua Tramping Club, Wellington, 21 January 1944.

remarks pointing out the inadequacies of the present system of administration either to preserve or to develop national parks: the system was not unified, there was no co-ordination of general policy, and the finance available was inadequate.[23]

The moment seemed ripe for reform. The department was now receptive to ideas; the Federation was ready to provide them. Furthermore, a vehicle for reform seemed miraculously to have appeared. By 1944 thoughts were turning towards planning for peace and the quality of life in peacetime New Zealand. Cabinet set up a body called the Organisation for National Development, which, by long term planning, was 'to prepare the transition from war to peace, to provide jobs for demobilised servicemen, and to develop the economy in anticipation of the post-war international economic strains'. A number of committees including one on Tourist Development, were set up and along with tourist development was considering the question of national parks. As an overall plan the Organisation for National Development proved a failure, and by 1946 it had been disbanded. One small result, however, was a report written by Ron Cooper, who convened a subcommittee on national parks, submitted on 3 September 1945 to the Tourist Development Committee, which adopted its recommendations.[25] Because of the collapse of the Organisation for National Development no action was taken at the time on the recommendations in this report, but it did, nevertheless, represent an important advance in official policy. Moreover, Cooper did not forget it, and in 1949 he suggested to D.M. Greig, departmental head since 1946, that its proposals could form the starting point of legislation.

The report proposed a comprehensive overhaul of national parks administration along the lines suggested by the Federated Mountain Clubs. It began by defining a national park in the terms clearly indicating a dual status as nature reserve and recreation area which Cooper had already used in his address to the Tararua Tramping Club. After describing the present system of administration the report went on to state that the membership of Park Boards could with advantage be drastically reduced, and commented that existing statutes did not set out general principles for the administration of national parks, or provide for any policy co-ordination. Other departments and organisations were interested in national parks, but regarded the parks from various and sometimes conflicting points of view: 'It appears to the subcommittee that some system of centralised direction and control of general policy is needed in the interests of more efficient administration and better protection of these natural reserves.' Finance for the maintenance of the parks was quite inadequate. The subcommittee's principal recommendations were that a central or national authority, representing government departments and other interested bodies be constituted, with responsibility for broad

23. Federated Mountain Clubs file, Galletly to Under-Secretary, Lands and Survey, 26 June 1944; ibid., Under-Secretary, Lands and Survey to Hon. Sec., Federated Mountain Clubs, 28 November 1944; ibid., Galletly to General Manager, Dept. of Industries and Commerce, 23 March 1945 (also in Lands and Survey, 22/4651/2).

24. W.B. Sutch, The Quest for Security in New Zealand, Wellington, 1966, pp. 345-6.

25. Lands and Survey, files 22/4651/2 and 4/426/2, handwritten memo to Minister of Lands, c. April 1949; information from F.T. Barber.

policy, for development of parks, for allocating funds, and for recommending the creation or enlargement of parks. Small district committees or boards should be appointed to deal with routine administration of individual parks. The State should provide adequate funds, and facilities for parks to be enjoyed by the people. Leases or licenses over national park land should be granted only with approval of the national authority, and only if for the public benefit.[26]

It is generally agreed that the work done in New Zealand in rehabilitating returned servicemen after the second world war was outstandingly successful. The Minister of Lands threw all his energies into the task, which also occupied much departmental time. 'People first' has always been a Labour maxim, and less essential issues were thrust into the background. It is no coincidence that national parks reform came to seem important and possible, only in the last months of the first Labour Administration. In 1936 Savage had regarded it as a luxury the country could not afford; by 1949 the country wanted more luxuries and could pay for them. The first steps towards drafting a comprehensive national parks bill were taken early in 1949.

At the same time the Federated Mountain Clubs with ear uncannily close to the ground, launched a fresh onslaught. At the Annual General Meeting in May 1949 it was resolved that the Federation should again approach the Government with a view to overhauling the national parks system and bringing in the Federated Mountain Club's pre-war scheme. The sponsor of this motion was the ageing but indefatigable Harper, who quoted current expenditure on national parks in New Zealand and the U.S.A. and proposed British expenditure, and suggested a central National Parks Authority of twelve, selected according to the qualifications laid down in Britain's recent Hobhouse Report on national parks.[27] On 31 May Harper and N.M. Thomson, for the Federated Mountain Clubs and R.H. Carter of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, waited on the Minister of Lands. Referring to the U.S. and Canadian systems, and to British proposals, Harper put forward a detailed scheme for a National Park Authority or Trust, and Boards.[28] In outline, Harper's scheme was very similar to that being put forward at the same time in the Department of Lands and Survey: since both derived to a large extent from the Federated Mountain Club's 1938 proposals this was not surprising.

In May and June several newspapers commented on New Zealand's lack of a defined policy for national parks, and pointed out that other countries were doing better. The *Evening Post* described some of the recommendations of the two post war British Reports on national parks and wild life conservation, which included, besides the setting up of a National Parks Commission with scientific and administrative staff, a ten year

26. Lands and Survey, file 4/426/2, Report of National Parks Subcommittee to Tourist Development Committee of Organisation for National Development (with March-April 1949).

27. Federated Mountain Clubs file, Report of 17th Annual General Meeting of Federated Mountain Clubs, 21 May 1949.

28. Lands and Survey, file 4/426/2, Notes of interview and of Harper's scheme; see also Federated Mountain Clubs file.

programme involving a capital expenditure of £9,250,000 and a recurrent expenditure of £170,000 in the first year and £750,000 when the scheme became fully operative. 'In view of what is being done in both Great Britain and America it may well be asked whether in the national interests the time has not arrived when the whole of our policy as regards conservation should not be completely reviewed.'[29] The *Weekly News* commented that the previous year's report to Parliament on national parks covered two thirds of a printed page, and the grant of £21,500 included only £8,000 for general administration and grants to Boards. It described the parks as 'meagrely maintained' and expressed support for the Federated Mountain Clubs scheme.[30] Public opinion had been slow to educate, but the sentiments now expressed by these newspapers indicated that a change of heart towards national parks was being experienced.

Although Mr Greig was very receptive to ideas and both he and his officials were enthusiastic about reform, one gains an impression that the real research into national parks administration in North America and Europe was done by well informed outsiders - particularly A.P. Harper (who was familiar with the British and the North American systems), L.W. McCaskill (who had studied the U.S. parks) and N.R.W. Thomas, an Auckland lawyer and a member of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture.[31] The National Parks bill was drafted by Ron Cooper, whose working notebooks have since been lost, so that detailed evidence about his research no longer exists. All one can say is that Cooper sympathetically absorbed ideas and information from many sources, much of it from men who were abler and more widely read than himself.

It was at first hoped that the legislation would be enacted in 1949: in the event nearly three years elapsed before its passage through Parliament. Although both Skinner and Corbett, Ministers of Lands in the successive Labour and National cabinets favoured national parks reform, the change of Government may have caused some delay. In 1951 the normal legislative programme was disrupted first by the great waterfront dispute and then by a snap general election in September. Another reason for the delay was the necessary, but rather cumbersome procedure whereby interested groups and individuals were consulted about the provisions of the bill.

Early in 1950 Mr Corbett approved the sending of copies of the second draft of the bill to Government Departments, to several societies and individuals interested in national parks, to the Secretaries of the Park

29. Evening Post, 16 May 1949, p. 6.

30. Weekly News, 1 June 1949, p. 31; see also Dominion, 18 May 1949, p.8.

31. Lands and Survey, file 4/426/2, Notes of Federated Mountain Clubs interview with Minister of Lands, 31 May 1949; Lands and Survey, 4/426, Thomas to Minister of Lands, 24 September 1947; Mr McCaskill says that the idea of wilderness areas came from a public meeting he organised in Christchurch in 1949 at which Dr Olaus Murie, leader of the U.S. Fiordland Expedition spoke. See Dominion, 18 May 1949, p. 8; Weekly News, 1 June 1949, p. 31.

Boards and to the Commissioners of Crown Lands. As a result a number of suggestions were sent in, all of which were carefully considered.

The Federated Mountain Clubs examined the draft with particular thoroughness, and followed up its written suggestions in a successful interview with the Minister. Harper in particular was most concerned that the National Parks Authority should not be a cipher, and attempted to strengthen it in relation to both the boards and the Government. Two small alterations were agreed to which more clearly subordinated the boards to the direction of the Authority. Harper was also dissatisfied with a clause empowering the Minister to give to the Authority 'such directions of a general character as appear to him expedient.'[32] Corbett agreed to delete this clause, but later, when Mr Greig pointed out that without it the Authority could ignore the Government's wishes completely, he was persuaded to put it back in modified form. In the exercise of its powers under the Act, the Authority was to 'have regard to any representations that may be made by the Minister to give effect to any decision of the Government in relation thereto.....'[33] Both Harper and N.R.W. Thomas suggested that the Minister might be an ex officio member of the Authority, but this honour was politely declined.[34]

Some suggestions concerned the membership of the Authority and of the Park Boards, and a number of alterations were made. For example, both the Federated Mountain Clubs and the Secretary of the Abel Tasman National Park Board pointed out that the New Zealand Forest Service should be represented on the Authority, with the result that the Director of Forestry was included.[35] In the end, the only body seriously aggrieved at exclusion from the Authority was the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture which in spite of its cultivated title had for long shown an interest in national parks.[36] The composition of the Park Boards was spelled out in much greater detail in the Act than in the bill as first drafted - detail which varied from one park to another and resulted from much negotiation and discussion.

One problem which had to be resolved was how to control tourist facilities in the parks. Provision was made for the erection of tramping and ski huts, but there were other buildings to be considered. At Arthur's

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32. Federated Mountain Clubs file, correspondence between Syme, Lockwood, Thomson and Harper, March to May 1950; Lands and Survey file, 4/426/2, Harper to Director General, Lands and Survey, 26 May 1950, and enclosure; ibid., Notes of deputation from Federated Mountain Clubs to Minister of Lands, 19 June 1950; ibid., copies of draft Bill.

33. Lands and Survey, file 4/426/2, Director General to Minister of Lands, 5 June 1952; ibid., note signed D.M.G., 12 June 1952; ibid., Minister of Lands to Secretary, Federated Mountain Clubs, 20 June 1952; information from D.M. Greig. Strangely enough, the wording in the Act is close to that in the first draft.

34. Lands and Survey, Notes of Federated Mountain Clubs deputation, 19 June 1950; ibid., Thomas to Cooper, 16 August 1950.

35. Lands and Survey, File 4/426/2 Notes of Federated Mountain Clubs deputation, 19 June 1950; ibid., Honourable Secretary, Abel Tasman National Park Board to Director General, 30 August 1950.

36. ibid., correspondence between Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture and Director General, Lands and Survey, 1950-52, and notes of consultation between Director General and Minister, October 1951, February-March 1952.

Pass there was a small township, containing a number of leasehold sections, and it was decided to exclude this area from the park altogether.[37] However a different decision was made about the Tourist and Publicity Department facilities: rather than make these areas over to the Tourist and Publicity Department it was decided that the land should be set aside for its use but still be subject to the Authority's control.[38]

Some negotiation on details of the bill was about local matters; the most complex problem being the relation of Egmont National Park to the Taranaki province. Mt Egmont, a single dormant volcanic cone rising out of some of the richest farmland in the country, is geographically and economically quite distinct from any other national park. Their importance of other national parks derives principally from their unique plant and bird life and from their scenic and recreational possibilities, whereas Egmont is vital to the economy of Taranaki, and consequently an effective policy of forest conservation and erosion control is essential. This fact was recognised in the special legislation enacted for Egmont National Park in 1924, which provided for the park to be divided into four segments, each controlled by a committee on which local bodies were represented, and to which they contributed on a liberal basis. For this reason the Egmont National Park Board at first rejected the proposed new system of administration out of hand: 'It is far too important a matter to be left to remote and disinterested control from Wellington.'[39] Only after much negotiation, involving not only departmental officers but also the Minister, was a compromise worked out, and agreed to in August 1951. This provided for the continuation of the committee system, the committees being subject to the control of the Board, which could delegate certain powers to them under the terms of the Act.[40]

The enthusiasm which greeted the National Parks Bill both inside and outside Parliament when it finally reached the House of Representatives showed how well its path had been smoothed. Although the National Parks Act provided for the proper administration and conservation of less than 4½% of New Zealand, it was hailed by one newspaper as 'an important turning point in New Zealand's history.'[41] It had taken half a century to engender enough concern for the environment to produce such an Act; in the second half century environmental issues have become a general concern.

A beginning had been made.

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37. Lands and Survey, 4/426/2, correspondence between Director General and Commissioner of Crown Lands, Christchurch; July-August 1950; April-May 1952.

38. ibid., Director General to Minister of Lands, 5 June 1952; ibid., Minister of Lands to Bodkin, 3 July 1952; Bodkin to Corbett, 25 July 1952.

39. Lands and Survey, Egmont National Park General, Vol. 1 (13/5), Note on proposed National Parks Bill (June 1950).

40 See correspondence and notes concerning Egmont National Park in Lands and Survey file 4/426/2, May-September 1950, July 1951; Lands and Survey, Egmont National Park General, Volume 1 (13/5), June 1950, June-August 1951.

41. Evening Post, 8 August 1952, p. 8.

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